

REMARKS

Claims 16-30 are pending. Claims 16-21, 24-28, and 30 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b). Applicant addresses the rejections as follows.

Amendments to the Specification

Applicant has amended the abstract to conform to the proper language and format requirements. The abstract, as amended, does not include the phrase "is described," nor does the abstract contain the legal phraseology "means" and "said."

Applicant has also amended Figure 1 to include the numeral "1," mentioned on page 7, line 15 of the specification. A replacement sheet which includes amended Figure 1 is provided herewith in compliance with 37 C.F.R. § 1.121(d).

Claims Amendments

Claim 16 has been amended to feature a "means of a coupling which automatically locates itself to be operatively linked with the transferring mechanism of the neighbouring module." Support for this amendment is found, for example, on page 10, lines 16-26, of the specification as filed. Claim 30 has been canceled.

The present amendments were made solely to expedite prosecution, and applicant reserves the right to pursue any canceled subject matter in this or in a continuing application. No new matter has been added.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. § 102 (b)

Claims 16-21, 24-28, and 30 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102 (b) as being anticipated by Feldl (U.S. Patent No. 5,096,045, herein “Feldl”). The Examiner states that Feldl shows at least two modules 12a and 12b having an operating position and a transportation position, and that the modules may be disengaged and transported.

Applicant respectfully disagrees. Feldl does not describe all of the features present in claim 16. Feldl instead describes a portable conveyor system having multiple separable conveyor sections. When bringing these conveyor sections into the operation position, the conveyor sections are positioned in end-to-end adjacency, as shown in Figure 3 of Feldl. A latching bridge mechanism needs to be disposed between two adjacent conveyor sections in order to connect these adjacent conveyor sections (Feldl, column 4, lines 35-40).

When bringing the portable conveyor system into the operation condition, oppositely disposed cut-away grooves 54, 55 on bracket 48 and cut-away grooves 56, 57 on bracket 49 extend over spindles 31 on conveyor sections 12a, 12b (Feldl, column 4, lines 40-45). Latch plate 59 is positioned exteriorly on one side of elongated frame 13 with arcuate cut-away groove 61 being positioned to receive roller spindle 31 on conveyor section 12b. Latch plate 59 is rotated about bridge spindle 46 to place cut-away groove 62 in position to slide over roller spindle 31 on conveyor section 12a. Once both spindles 31 in conveyor sections 12a, 12b are engaged by arcuate cut-away grooves 61,

62 in latch plate 59, latch plate 60 is rotatably positioned to engage arcuate cut-away grooves 63, 64 about opposite ends of spindle 31. Latch plates 59, 60 releasably lock conveyor sections 12a, 12b together to maintain skid plate 67 adjacent to the respective endless conveyor belts 38 and place idler gears 23, 24 into meshing engagement with roller gears 27, 28 on both conveyor sections 12a, 12b. Any suitable retention device, such as, for example, retaining rings and washers (not shown) may be employed on the respective ends of spindle 31, to retain latch plates 59, 60 thereon (Feldl, column 4, lines 47-65). Feldl also describes the inverse process of bringing the table into transportation position (columns 4-5) and describes the removal of latch plates 59, 60.

The features described in Feldl are different from the features of the present invention. Claim 16 recites that the transferring mechanism of a module is operatively connectable to the transferring mechanism of a neighbouring module as the table is brought into the operating position and operatively disengaged when the table is brought into the transportation position. “Operatively connectable,” as defined on page 10, lines 16-26 of the specification as filed, means that the conveyor belt is driven by means of a coupling which automatically locates itself to be operatively linked with the drive of the central module when the end modules are brought into the operation position. In Feldl, the coupling does not automatically locate itself to be operatively linked with the drive of a neighbouring module. Instead, the additional step of manually placing a bridging element and applying a retention device is required.

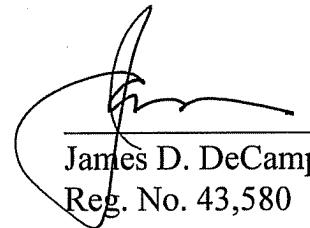
Feldl does not describe a coupling which automatically locates itself to be operatively linked with the transferring mechanism of the neighbouring module. Claim 16 has been amended to incorporate this feature and now recites that the coupling "automatically locates itself to be operatively linked with the transferring mechanism of the neighbouring module." Accordingly, the rejection of claims 16-21 and 24-28 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) may now be withdrawn. The objection to claims 22, 23, and 29 may also be withdrawn.

CONCLUSION

Applicant submits that the application is in condition for allowance, and this action is hereby respectfully requested. If there are any charges or any credits, please apply them to Deposit Account No. 03-2095.

Respectfully submitted,

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